
ANIMAL ETHICS COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In accordance with the requirements and governing principles of the *Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes 8th Edition 2013* (the Code), the University of Sydney (the University) has established The University of Sydney Animal Ethics Committee (AEC) that has oversight of all staff/students whose work involves the use of animals for scientific and/or educational purposes.

1.2 The AEC is an executive committee of the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sydney. The AEC reports through the Deputy-Vice Chancellor (Research), as a representative of the institution, on all matters affecting research and teaching involving animals at the University of Sydney.

1.3 The University of Sydney will comply with Section 2 of the Code: “Responsibilities” at all times.

2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

2.1 The primary responsibility of the AEC is to ensure, on behalf of the University, that all activities relating to the care and use of animals is conducted in compliance with the Code (the Code 2.3.1). The AEC applies a set of principles, outlined in the Code, that govern the ethical conduct of people whose work involves the use of animals for scientific purposes. The role of the AEC is to ensure that projects are ethically acceptable by ensuring that the use of animals is justified, provides for the welfare of those animals, incorporate the principles of Replacement, Reduction and Refinement and conforms to the requirements of the Code (the Code 2.3.2).

2.2 Section 2.3 of the Code outlines the responsibilities of AECs and this must form part of the terms of reference.

3. MEMBERSHIP OF THE AEC

3.1 The AEC must have a membership that will allow it to fulfil its terms of reference and meet the requirements for categories of minimum membership (the Code 2.2.18). It must comprise at least four persons, including a separate person appointed to each of the following categories:

- **Category A:** a person with qualifications in veterinary science that are recognised for registration as a veterinary surgeon in Australia, and with experience relevant to the institution’s activities or the ability to acquire relevant knowledge.
- **Category B:** a suitably qualified person with substantial and recent experience in the use of animals for scientific purposes relevant to the institution and the business of the AEC. This must include possession of a higher degree in research or equivalent experience. If the

business of the AEC relates to the use of animals for teaching only, a teacher with substantial and recent experience may be appointed.

- **Category C:** a person with demonstrable commitment to, and established experience in, furthering the welfare of animals, who is not employed by or otherwise associated with the institution, and who is not involved in the care and use of animals for scientific purposes. Veterinarians with specific animal welfare interest and experience may meet the requirements of this category. While not representing an animal welfare organisation, the person should, where possible, be selected on the basis of active membership of, and endorsement by, such an organisation.
- **Category D:** a person not employed by or otherwise associated with the institution and who has never been involved in the use of animals in scientific or teaching activities, either in their employment or beyond their undergraduate education. Category D members should be viewed by the wider community as bringing a completely independent view to the AEC, and must not fit the requirements of any other Category.

3.2 The Chair should hold a senior position within the University.

3.3 An Acting Chair (from within its membership) must be appointed to cover short-term absences by the Chair.

3.4 Category A and B members can be nominated by Heads of Faculties/Schools if they have the suitable qualifications as described in 3.1. The Chair will contact the prospective member to outline the conditions of the membership category and invite them to join the AEC.

3.5 Category C members must have suitable qualifications as described in 3.1. While not representing an animal welfare organisation, the person should, where possible, be selected on the basis of active membership of, and endorsement by, such an organisation.

3.6 Category D members must be independent persons as described in 3.1. This member may be selected from the community via word of mouth and advertisement. Prior to commencing, the member must undergo an interview process with the Chair and the Animal Welfare Manager to determine suitability of the candidate.

3.7 Category C and D members must together represent at least one-third of the AEC membership.

3.8 Prior to appointment, all members must first attend an AEC meeting as an “observer”, after which they may accept the position. The Chair and all members of the AEC will then be formally appointed in writing by the Deputy-Vice Chancellor (Research).

3.9 Prior to appointment, AEC members will acknowledge, in writing that they will accept:

- The Terms of Reference of the AEC
- The Grievance Policy of the AEC
- A Confidentiality Agreement

3.10 The terms of membership for those appointed to the AEC shall normally be for a three year period. This period is deemed to be sufficient to permit new members to become familiar with operational procedures and the variety of research and teaching at a large University.

3.11 A member can be re-appointed for additional period as required.

3.12 Members may resign from the AEC at any time by advising the Chair in writing with a minimum two month notification period. The Chair will advise the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) of the resignation.

3.13 On the recommendation of the AEC Chair, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) may request a member of the AEC to resign from the AEC.

3.14 The Chair and the Animal Welfare Manager will monitor the AEC membership need in accordance to the Code.

3.15 All changes to the membership will be reported to the “Animal Research Review Panel” within 30 days of formal appointment.

4. OPERATIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY AEC

4.1 The AEC will determine its meeting frequency and will hold a minimum of four (4) meetings per year.

4.2 Each meeting must have a quorum. One member of each category must be present at all times during the meeting and if the committee has more than four members, Categories C and D must represent no less than one third of the members.

4.3 Decisions by the AEC with regard to approval, modification or rejection of a proposal, or withdrawal of approval for a project, should be made on the basis of consensus. Where consensus cannot be reached after reasonable effort to resolve differences, the AEC should explore with the applicant(s) ways of modifying the project that may lead to consensus. If consensus is still unachievable, the AEC should only proceed to a majority decision after members have been allowed a period of time to review their positions, followed by further discussion.

4.4 The AEC may invite people with specific expertise to provide advice as required. The AEC should reach agreement on how advice can be sought from outside experts without breaching confidentiality.

4.5 Members of the AEC are required to declare general potential conflict of interest at the commencement of the meeting. Should a member identify a conflict of interest at any time during the meeting, this should be declared at that time.

4.6 Members of the AEC whose objectivity may be influenced by an interest (including consideration of an application submitted by that member or by a colleague) are required to leave the meeting during the decision making process.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY AEC

Under the Code section 2.3.2, the AEC has the responsibilities to:

5.1 Review applications for projects and approve only those projects and proposed amendments to projects that are ethically acceptable and conform to the requirements and governing principles of the Code, the Animal Research Act 1985 (NSW) and the Animal Research Regulations (NSW). Judgement as to whether a proposed use of animals is ethically acceptable must be based on information that demonstrates the principles of the Code, and must balance whether the potential effects on the wellbeing of the animals involved is justified by the potential benefits.

- The AEC may decide that:
 - an application to commence a project or activity, or amend an approved project or activity, is approved with or without conditions, deferred subject to modification, or not approved;
 - an approval is suspended or withdrawn.

5.2 Review applications for activities associated with the care and management of animals in facilities, including procedures applicable to breeding programs integral to the maintenance of an animal line, and approve only those activities that are ethically acceptable and conform to the requirements and governing principles of the Code, the Animal Research Act 1985 (NSW) and the Animal Research Regulations (NSW).

5.3 Conduct follow-up review of approved projects and activities, at least annually, and allow the continuation of approval for only those projects and activities that are ethically acceptable and conform to the requirements and governing principles of the Code, the Animal Research Act 1985 (NSW) and the Animal Research Regulations (NSW).

5.4 Monitor the care and use of animals, including the acquisition, transport, breeding, housing and husbandry of animals and the practices and procedures involved in the care of animals in facilities on a regular and ongoing bases to assess compliance with the Code, the Animal Research Act 1985 (NSW), the Animal Research Regulations (NSW) and decisions of the AEC.

- The AEC monitors the care and use of animals by inspecting animals, animal housing and the conduct of procedures and practices. The AEC inspect all animal facilities at least once per year. In addition, the Animal Welfare Manager and/or AEC delegates conduct unannounced inspections of facilities and AEC approved projects.
- Where an activity may cause pain or distress, the AEC may elect to conduct additional inspections to avoid or minimise harm, including pain and distress, to those animals.
- The AEC maintain records of inspections that include the names of attendees, observations, any identified problems, recommended actions, ongoing or outstanding issues, and outcomes.

5.5 Approve guidelines for the care and use of animals on behalf of the University.

- All proposed guidelines and standard operating procedures will be reviewed at AEC meetings. Once approved, these guidelines will be available for all University of Sydney researchers on the

animal ethics website.

5.6 Take appropriate actions regarding unexpected adverse events in accordance with Section 3 of the Code.

- The action taken is to ensure that animal wellbeing is not compromised, the issue is addressed promptly, and activities that have the potential to adversely affect animal wellbeing cease immediately. Actions may include consulting with relevant people, the authorisation of emergency treatment, humane killing of animals and, where necessary, suspension or withdrawal approval for the project or activity.

5.7 Take appropriate actions regarding non-compliance which may result in suspension or withdrawal of ethics approval to ensure that animal wellbeing is not compromised, the issue is addressed promptly and activities that have the potential to adversely affect animal wellbeing cease immediately. When considered necessary, non-compliance may be escalated to the Director, Research Integrity to manage as research misconduct under the Research Code of Conduct 2013 policy.

5.8 Provide advice and recommendations to the University on all University plans, policies, procedures and guidelines regarding the care and use of animals, animal housing, and strategies required to ensure that the requirements of the Code are maintained and that matters affecting animal wellbeing are addressed.

5.9 Provide advice to the University on the building or modification of animal facilities to ensure that the requirements of the Code are maintained and that matters affecting animal wellbeing are addressed.

- In addition, the AEC must conduct a final inspection of any modifications to animal facilities or new animal facilities prior to final approval.

6. REPORTING

6.1 The AEC must comply with the reporting requirements of the University of Sydney and the Code.

6.2 The AEC must submit a written report on its activities at least annually to the Deputy Vice- Chancellor (Research). The report should include information on:

- numbers and types of projects assessed and approved or rejected;
- the physical facilities for the care and use of animals by the institution;
- activities that have supported the educational needs of AEC members, and of personnel involved in the care and use of animals;
- administrative or other difficulties being experienced; and
- any matters that may affect the institution's ability to maintain compliance with the Code and if necessary the provision of suitable recommendations.

6.3 The Committee also reports annually to the NSW Department of Primary Industries. The AEC will also report to other State and Territory Governments as required.

7. AEC EXECUTIVE

7.1 According to the Code (2.3.23): “If established, an AEC Executive:

- must include the chairperson and at least one member from Category C or D
- may be delegated to approve minor amendments to approved projects or activities, for ratification at the next AEC meeting. The AEC should provide guidance on the type of activity that would be a minor amendment. A minor amendment may include a change to an approved project or activity where the proposed change is not likely to cause harm to the animals, including pain and distress
- Must not approve new applications.”

7.2 If required the University of Sydney Animal Ethics Committee will appoint (by nomination) a sub- committee from its members called the Executive.

7.3 The AEC Executive consists of representatives from all categories. Each year, the AEC is asked for nominations for membership on the Executive for the following categories: Category A; Category B; Category C and Category D

7.4 The Executive has been established to streamline the animal ethics process, to increase the efficiency of the AEC and to reduce workload on the AEC thus allowing additional time for discussion of ethical considerations, invitations to researchers and continuing education.

7.5 The role of the executive is to review responses to conditions on applications and/- modifications, approve minor and straightforward modifications to protocols including minor changes to procedures, animal numbers or strains, approve the additions/deletions of associate investigators and review annual reports.

7.6 All decisions by the Executive are reviewed and ratified by the entire AEC at the next meeting.

8. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHAIR

The Chair must:

8.1 Ensure that the AEC operates in accordance with the principles and requirements of the Code; the relevant policies of the institution and the agreed AEC procedures.

8.2 Ensure that an agenda is produced prior to each meeting and the meeting will consider AEC business as required to fulfil the Committee’s responsibilities.

8.3 Ensure that applications are considered by the AEC and the outcomes are conveyed to the researchers in a timely fashion.

8.4 Advise the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) the levels of resources required by the AEC.

8.5 Represent the AEC in negotiations with the University.

8.6 Oversee all requirements of the AEC to report and review its operation as outlined in the Code.

8.7 Ensure AEC records are maintained and made available for review by the institution and authorised external reviewers.

9. DUTIES OF THE ANIMAL WELFARE MANAGER

The Animal Welfare Manager (AWM):

9.1 Is a person with veterinary qualifications appointed by the University of Sydney and is authorised by the AEC to ensure that projects are proceeding in compliance with the Code and the decisions of the AEC.

9.2 Assists the Chair in maintaining the efficient operation of the AEC.

9.3 Is the first point of contact for researchers/students wishing to access the AEC. This person provides the researchers/students with advice and assistance regarding ethics applications, technical veterinary advice and general advice on relevant ethics procedures.

9.4 Oversees that the ethics administration maintains a record of all applications and relevant correspondence (as described in 6.9).

9.5 Organises the distribution of information to all new members with a copy of the Code, meeting schedule and animal house inspections.

10. TRAINING OF ANIMAL RESEARCHERS

10.1 The University will provide and facilitate training for researchers, students, animal staff employed at the University for which it provides legislative purview.